

NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION



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DECISION NOTICE ADOPTION OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Sanders County 2022 Invasive Milfoil Management
January 26, 2022
Sanders County
Noxon and Cabinet Gorge reservoirs (47.91785, -115.6905)
Sanders County

Existing Environmental Review Document: https://fwp.mt.gov/public-notices/news/2021/jul/0728_avistanoxoncabinetewm

Type and Purpose of Action

This project will control 30 or more acres of Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) at public access points in the Noxon and Cabinet Gorge reservoirs in 2022 as part of the county's ongoing management of aquatic invasive species. The primary goal is to keep the reservoirs fishable and swimmable, and the secondary goal is to prevent the spread and propagation of EWM.

Specifically, the project proponent proposes to:

1. Treat EWM in Priority 1 (boat launches, docks, and swimming areas) sites in the reservoirs with the objective of reducing the quantity of milfoil by 75 percent or more from pretreatment to six weeks after treatment; and,
2. Treat as much of the Priority 2 (high traffic mid-reservoir areas) sites, as feasible, in areas not included in an alternative treatment method.

This project will complement a pilot project planned by Avista Corp. to open boating lanes and reduce EWM and hybrid watermilfoil in dense weed beds offshore using a harvester and increase edge habitat for the sport fishery in the reservoir. The harvester is designed to remove the weeds and reduce fragmentation of EWM. The Sanders County Aquatic Invasive Plant Task Force (Task Force) is coordinating with Avista to identify beds to be used for the pilot project and what beds will remain undisturbed. Some Priority 2 beds are reserved for the pilot project, reducing the estimated acreage of EWM to be treated with herbicide by approximately 46 acres. The remaining acreage to be treated is expected to be between 30 and 50 acres. The remaining infested Priority 1 and Priority 2 areas will be managed using aquatic herbicide, following recommendation of the county's Scientific Advisory Panel. The panel will base its recommendations on the latest available monitoring data, post-treatment results, and the guidance under the county's Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan. Treatment sites will be refined following a survey of the reservoirs conducted by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) in July. That data will be provided to a licensed contractor who will conduct the

treatment in early August. Eurasian watermilfoil is categorized as a Priority 2A noxious weed in the 2019 Montana Noxious Weed List. Sanders County's management goals are to contain, control and reduce existing aquatic invasive species, prevent new introduction, and reduce the negative impacts to natural resource communities while addressing wider reservoir uses. This project is consistent with the 2016 Montana Invasive Species Framework objective to "ensure that invasive species control restores the desired ecological, economic and cultural values to the land that is being managed." It also is consistent with Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection, which allows for adaptive management to learn from past experiences, improve effectiveness and reduce impacts.

DNRC will approve the grant to provide funding for the Sanders County 2022 Invasive Milfoil Management Project.

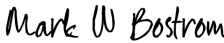
Criteria for Adopting Existing Environmental Review

- ☒ The existing environmental review covers an action paralleling or closely related to the proposed action.
- ☒ The information in the existing environmental review is accurate and clearly presented.
- ☒ The information in the existing environmental review is applicable to the action being considered.
- ☒ All appropriate Agencies were consulted during preparation of the existing environmental review.
- ☒ Alternatives to the proposed action evaluated as part of the existing environmental review effort.
- ☒ The impacts of the proposed action been accurately identified as part of the existing environmental review.
- ☒ The existing environmental review identifies any significant impacts as a result of the proposed action and those identified will they be mitigated below the level of significance.

Adopt

The existing environmental review can be considered sufficient to satisfy DNRC's MEPA review responsibilities. No further analysis needed.

Existing Analysis Reviewed By:	Name: Emily Moran Date: 2/7/2022 Title: Administrative Assistant Email: EMoran@mt.gov
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Approved By:	Name: Mark Bostrom Title: CARD Division Administrator
Signature:	DocuSigned by:  Date: 2/11/2022 8:44:18 AM MST BF7A1C50B2AF4DE...

Notes: Red dots denote the location of Eurasian watermilfoil beds, but not the extent as this can change annually. Priority treatment areas within the proposed action area are determined annually based on pretreatment sampling results and available funding.